

PROPOSED CHANGES TO CITY OF HOUSTON, CODE OF ORDINANCES
COMPENSATING OPEN SPACE: CHAPTER 42

Whereas: In development of multi-family residential neighborhoods it is desired to create pockets of density, i.e. increased number of units per acre, in suburban developments outside the 610 loop in order to provide choice of life-style settings during all stages of life in suburban neighborhoods, and

Whereas: it is desirable to have public open space to compensate for increased density of units per acre to maintain quality of life,

Therefore:

- 1) The compensating open space can be collected in exterior spaces that are attached to the housing developments. There are four types of compensating open space: A) Connections/Paths, B) Courtyards, C) Gardens and D) Play Areas.
- 2) Compensating open space requirements generated by an urban density unit must be met within _____ feet of the unit and must be connected to the unit by connection/paths or sidewalks on public right-of-ways.
- 3) Garden Requirements by type:
 - A) **CONNECTION/PATH:** to be considered compensating open space connections/paths must meet these requirements:
 - i) **CONNECTION/PATH: DEF:** an open space that is bound on the two sides perpendicular to direction of travel and open for travel by the residents on the two sides in the direction of travel. The open sides in direction of travel can have a wall no taller than 4'-2" and no more than 50% solid which is equipped with a gate or gateway open to the residents. A garden with locked gate will not count toward the compensating open space requirement.
 - ii) **WALKING SURFACE / PLANTING RATIO:** The connection/path must have a minimum of 4' wide walking surface, other than planting, for its entire length.
 - iii) **MINIMUM WIDTH:** minimum of 25'-0" (7.62 m) wide. Width is the dimension perpendicular to direction of movement on the path.
 - iv) **MINIMUM LENGTH:** a connection/path can be minimum of 50'-0" long.
 - v) **PROPORTION, IN PLAN:** maximum ratio of width to length of Connections/ Path: 1:5. The width of a connection/path that varies in width will be the average width of the connection path.
 - vi) **PROPORTION, IN SECTION:** maximum ratio of width to height of bounding walls, either fences or building faces, that are perpendicular to the direction of travel in the connection/path: 1:3.2. Height is measured from top of walking surface. Bounding walls are those walls or fences which are taller than 4'-2". Is there a need for a definition of average height?

- vii) **ACCESS TO PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAYS:** Connections/Paths must connect on one side to a public right-of-way or a courtyard, garden or play area. In no case can a Connection/Path connect to a public right-of-way through a pool enclosure area.
- viii) **OPPOSING FRONT DOORS:** Opposing front doors are those that face each other across the connection/path and whose centerlines are within 20' of each other.
 - a) Opposing front doors that open to the path must be in alcoves inset into the face of the buildings that fronts the connection/path. **Exception:** If a Connection/Path is greater than 30'-0" wide one of each pair of opposing doors can face the Connection/ Path.
 - b) There must be a minimum of 4 front doors of residential units opening onto each Connection / Path.
- ix) **SHAPE QUALITY:** 40% of the connection/path can be (around the corner). There is a mathematical formula for this.
- x) **MAXIMUM AMOUNT:** Connection/Paths can only be 35% of required compensating open space.
- xi) **ADJACENCY:** Connection /Paths can be adjacent to any land use, but no less than 50% of the bounding surfaces in any single connection/path must be residential structures, single family or multifamily.

B) COURTYARDS: to be considered compensating open space courtyards must meet these requirements:

- i) **COURTYARDS: DEF:** an open space that is bound on all of its faces by walls, fences or plantings up to a minimum of eight feet. No through vehicular traffic or parking is allowed in a courtyard.
- ii) **BOUNDING WALLS:** The bounding walls, fences or plantings must be at least 75% opaque. **Exception:** Bounding sides can be covered walkways or arcades whose vertical support are no less than 15% of the bounding surface. No one side or bounding surface can be more than 25% open for through pedestrian traffic.
- iii) **WALKING SURFACE / PLANTING RATIO:** walking surface to planting area ratio can be up to 4:1.
- iv) **MINIMUM WIDTH:** a courtyard can be no less than 40' wide.
- v) **MINIMUM LENGTH:** a courtyard can be no less than 60' long.
- vi) **PROPORTION, IN PLAN:** a) minimum ratio of width to length is 1:1.5. A courtyard meets this requirement if a rectangle whose shortest side is 40' fits inside it. B) Maximum ratio of width to length of Courtyards: 1:4.
- vii) **PROPORTION IN SECTION:** has to have some view of sky can't be fully covered with roof or roof overhangs. Some percentage to be determined.
- viii) **ACCESS TO PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAYS:** Courtyards must connect on one full side to a public right-of-way, or a Connection/Path, garden or play area.
- ix) **SHAPE QUALITY:** 20% of the courtyard can be (around the corner). There is a mathematical formula for this trying to describe contiguity, lack of alcoves

- x) **MAXIMUM AMOUNT:** 75% of the required compensating open space can be courtyards.

C) **GARDENS:** to be considered compensating open space, gardens must meet these requirements:

- i) **GARDENS, DEF:** an open space that is bound on less than 50% of its faces by walls, fences or plantings.
- ii) **BOUNDING WALLS:**
- iii) **WALKING SURFACE / PLANTING RATIO:** maximum walking surface to planting area ratio: 20%
- iv) **MINIMUM WIDTH:** a garden can be no less than 40' wide.
- v) **MINIMUM LENGTH:** a garden can be no less than 60' long.
- vi) **PROPORTION, IN PLAN:** minimum ratio of width to length is 1:1.5. A garden meets this requirement if a rectangle whose shortest side is 40' fits inside it. Maximum ratio of width to length of Gardens: 1:4
- vii) **PROPORTION IN SECTION:**
- viii) **ACCESS TO PUBLIC RIGHT-OF WAYS:** Gardens must connect on one full side to a public right-of-way, or a Connection/Path, garden or play area that connects to a public right-of-way
- ix) **SHAPE QUALITY:** 20% of the connection/path can be (around the corner). There is a mathematical formula for this

MAXIMUM AMOUNT:

D) **PLAYAREAS:** to be considered compensating open space connections/paths must meet these requirements:

- i) **PLAYAREAS, DEF:** an open space that is .
- ii) **MINIMUM WIDTH:**
- iii) **MINIMUM LENGTH:**
- iv) **PROPORTION, IN PLAN:**
- v) **PROPORTION IN SECTION:**
- vi) **ACCESS TO PUBLIC RIGHT-OF WAYS:**
- vii) **SHAPE QUALITY:**
- viii) **MAXIMUM AMOUNT:**